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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 03/10/08

Index:

- 1) Top headlines
- 2) Editorials
- 3) Prime Minister's weekend, daily schedules (Nikkei)

Whaling:

- 4) IWC condemns Sea Shepherd for "dangerous actions" (Mainichi)
- 5) IWC raps Sea Shepherd's actions (Sankei)
- 6) LDP's Nakagawa suggests need for JCG to use weapons for warning, even with option of sinking activists' boats in self-defense (Mainichi)

Diet agenda:

- 7) Ruling coalition eyes punishment for child porn possession (Yomiuri)
- 8) Stalled Diet session expected to normalize today (Tokyo Shimbun)
- 9) Ruling parties want to hold exec meeting with opposition parties over nominations for BOJ posts (Yomiuri) 7
- 10) Opposition bloc opposed to "BOJ Vice Gov. Ito" nomination (Nikkei)
- 11) BOJ mulls "acting governor" (Sankei)
- 12) Diet dissolution, general election "September or later": New Komeito head (Sankei)

Defense topics:

- 13) Defense Ministry revamps emergency reporting system (Asahi)
- 14) Defense Minister Ishiba encourages MSDF brass staff to speak out to politics (Sankei)

15) Okinawa forms executive committee to rally against U.S. military incidents (Akahata)
16) 20 PERCENT of U.S. military's on-base housing in Okinawa left unoccupied (Mainichi)

Polls:

17) Mainichi industrial poll finds 70 PERCENT of surveyed business corporations give high marks to Kyoto Protocol, but only 25 PERCENT deem it possible for Japan to attain its target for emissions cuts (Mainichi)
18) 78 PERCENT in another poll sees domestic economic slump as worsening (Tokyo Shimbun)

G-8 events:

19) Japan to host expanded G-8 summit meetings on climate change, African development, with 23 countries participating (Mainichi)

Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:

Collision between MSDF Aegis destroyer and fishing boat exposes malfunction of civilian control

Mainichi:

More than 2,000 A-bomb victims expected to apply for government recognition under new standard

Yomiuri:

Over 90 PERCENT of highway-construction projects by transport ministry found to be discretionary contracts

TOKYO 00000616 002 OF 012

Nikkei:

Sony to stop supplying cellular phones to NTT DoCoMo

Sankei:

Shinginko Tokyo reports only one-fourth of unrecoverable loans in response to suggestion by ex-executives

Tokyo Shimbun:

Today marks 63rd anniversary of firebombing of Tokyo

Akahata:

Farewell to neo-liberalism: Social disparities expanding

2) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

(1) Proposals for a society of hope: Get over the myth of racially homogenous society

Mainichi:

(1) Social security budget: Take a second look at target of constraining medical expenses for people aged 75 and over
(2) Ban dispatch of day workers by amending relevant law

Yomiuri:

(1) Government's local agencies: Transfer most operations to local areas
(2) Use amendment to financial products trading law to strengthen market

Nikkei:

(1) Accelerating reorganization of electronic industry leading companies to specialize
(2) Eliminate unscrupulous sales tactics

Sankei:

(1) Medical services for elderly: Squarely look at problems and fix them
(2) Unlawful transactions among certified public accountants: Forgotten work ethics

Tokyo Shimbun:

- (1) Launch of "Kibo" research module: Show nation's presence with unique technology
- (2) Cell-phones: Advance into foreign markets

Akahata:

- (1) Shed light on cause of Aegis destroyer's collision with fishing boat; Do not seek refuge in discussions on reforming Defense Ministry

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, March 7

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
March 8, 2008

08:30

Attended cabinet meeting in the Diet building. Health Minister Masuzoe stayed behind. Followed by Chief Cabinet Secretary

TOKYO 00000616 003 OF 012

Machimura.

09:20

Met at the Kantei with LDP Reform Implementation Taskforce Head Takebe.

09:37

Arrived at his official residence.

10:00

Attended the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the fire fighting system in local governments held at Nippon Budokan Hall.

11:56

Met Lower House member Ryu Shionoya.

13:15

Met Machimura. Followed by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Futahashi.

14:12

Met Administrative Reform Minister Watanabe. Followed by Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka.

15:50

Met Futahashi. Later, met Vice Health Minister Edogawa, Social Insurance Agency Director General Banno, and Internal Affairs Ministry Administrative Evaluation Bureau Director General Seki.

16:38

Met National Police Agency Deputy Director General Ando. Followed by Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Bureau Director General Saiki.

17:19

Met Secretary General Ibuki. Joined by Machimura.

18:04

Met METI Minister Amari, Vice METI Minister Kitabata, Small and Medium Enterprise Agency Director General Fukumizu.

19:13

Met Sudan Presidential Assistant Nafi, with LDP International Affairs Bureau Head Mihara and others.

19:32

Dined with editorial board members from press companies at a Japanese restaurant in Shiba-Koen

21:27

Returned to his official residence.

Prime Minister's schedule, March 8

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

March 9, 2008

Spent all day at his official residence.

Prime Minister's schedule, March 9

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2008

TOKYO 00000616 004 OF 012

10:04

Arrived at his private residence in Nozawa.

15:23

Returned to his official residence.

4) IWC issues statement condemning Sea Shepherd for dangerous actions

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
March 8, 2008

Chiaki Ikeda, London

The interim meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), which was held in London to dissolve confrontation between pro-whaling and anti-whaling countries, on March 8 released a statement condemning the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, an environmental protection organization that has taken actions to hinder Japan's research whaling. The meeting ended on the 8th.

According to the Fisheries Ministry, Japan suddenly proposed taking up the issue at the outset of the meeting on the 6th.

The statement stressed: "Any actions that are a risk to human life and property in relation to the activities of vessels at sea cannot be allowed." The statement calls on Sea Shepherd to discontinue its dangerous actions, such as chasing the whaler and hurling bottles of chemicals at it. The commission also calls on it to cooperate with the IWC member countries.

5) IWC statement condemns Sea Shepherd

SANKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
March 10, 2008

Masato Kimura, London

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) ended its three-day midterm conference in London on March 8, unanimously adopting a statement strongly calling on its members, including the Netherlands, which has allowed America's environmental group Sea Shepherd to carry the Dutch flag, and Australia, which has allowed the group's vessel to homeport there, to take action to deal with the group's activities. IWC Chairman William Hogarth, in his effort to normalize IWC activities, announced his intent to make recommendations in the name of the chairman at the upcoming IWC annual meeting in Santiago, Chile, on a schedule from late May to late June.

Of the 78 member nations, 54 took part in the midterm conference. Japanese delegate Akira Nakamae, deputy director-general of Japan's Fisheries Agency, strongly condemned Sea Shepherd's activities. Following him, the IWC meeting adopted a statement saying that any acts that endanger lives and assets at sea are never acceptable. No objection was voiced against the use of warning shots by a research whaling ship.

Similar resolutions were adopted in 2006 and 2007, but unlike them, the statement this time denounced Sea Shepherd by name for the first time. The statement calls on IWC members to work together to deter

TOKYO 00000616 005 OF 012

Sea Shepherd's dangerous acts by domestic and international laws. According to a Japanese official involved in discussion, Australia proposed reconsidering research whaling, but this proposal was not put on the agenda for discussion.

6) LDP's Shoichi Nakagawa: Vessel could be sunk in self-defense

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
March 10, 2008

There has occurred an incident in which U.S. environmental activists aboard a vessel threw bottles containing chemicals and other objects at a Japanese whaler in the Southern Ocean. Appearing on a commercial television program yesterday, Shoichi Nakagawa, a former Policy Research Council chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party, said regarding the incident:

"It was an act of piracy. Japanese nationals have been injured. (Maritime security officials) should not have just fired warning shots but also have threatened or sunk the vessel using weapons in self-defense."

He also underlined the need to study revising related laws to allow vessels to take necessary steps to secure security at sea, saying, "Legislation not allowing any action is insufficient. Laws must be revised."

7) Ruling camp to revise law to criminalize possession of child pornography

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
March 9, 2008

In an effort to prevent the dissemination of child pornography over the Internet, the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito have decided to revise the Child Protection Law against Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in order to ban and punish "simple possession" of child pornography. The ruling coalition intends to submit a lawmaker-initiated bill in the current Diet session. The decision reflects a sharp rise in the number of victims in child pornography cases and a delay in Japan's response internationally.

Simple possession points to such cases as individuals collecting images or pictures for purposes other than selling or offering them, or individuals recording such images on CD or DVD. It has become a problem that a number of images around the world have been sent from Japan.

On this issue, U.S. Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer will meet Justice Minister Hatoyama, possibly on March 11, to ask the Japanese government to take measures to ban simple possession of child pornography. According to the Justice Ministry, only Japan and Russia, among the Group of Eight (G-8) countries, do not prohibit simple possession.

The LDP held the first meeting of the newly established subcommittee on reviewing the anti-child-pornography law, chaired by Mayumi Moriyama, on March 7. In it, participants decided to promote discussion on banning and punishing simple possession. The New Komeito also set up a similar project team last December and has discussed a review of the said law.

TOKYO 00000616 006 OF 012

8) Diet to return to normal today with agreement reached between Diet policy chiefs from LDP, DPJ

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
March 8, 2008

In a meeting held in the Diet on the afternoon of March 7, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Seiji Suzuki and the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Susumu Yanase agreed to hold today the Upper House Budget Committee's board of directors

meeting, which has not been held since March 4.

The Diet, which has been stalled since Feb. 29, when the ruling bloc forced a budget bill for 2008 through the Lower House, will likely be normalized. The budget bill is expected to be discussed in the Upper House Budget Committee possibly tomorrow.

In the dialogue with Suzuki, Yanase asked him to make clear the responsibility of Upper House Budget Committee Chairman Yoshitada Konoike (LDP), because he continued to exercise his authority to set committee meetings. Yanase also filed a protest with Suzuki against Konoike for his describing the DPJ's strategy of refusing deliberations on bills as stemming from the DPJ's deep inferiority complex.

The opposition bloc will likely enter discussions on a deliberation schedule in the Diet once the stage is set for the Diet to return to normal with Konoike making an apology.

9) Nomination of new BOJ governor: Government, ruling parties want to reach settlement at secretaries general meeting; Roll call on the 12th likely to be put off

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)
March 10, 2008

Regarding the selection of a new Bank of Japan (BOJ) governor, the government intends to promote Deputy Governor Toshiro Muto to the post. In this regard, a proposal was floated on March 9 in the government and the ruling parties for settling the matter at a meeting of the secretaries general of both the ruling and opposition parties prior to a roll call in the Lower and Upper Houses. That is because some members of ruling and opposition parties are wary of Prime Minister Fukuda and DPJ President Ozawa reaching a decision between themselves. Though the DPJ is determined to reject the proposal for picking Muto as governor, the government and the ruling parties have no intention of replacing him with another candidate. In order to secure time for talks between both camps before a roll call, some are calling for postponing a roll call slated for the 12th.

LDP Secretary General Ibuki appearing on NHK and TV Asahi talk shows expressed his hope to see talks between the ruling and opposition parties before a roll call on the selection of a new BOJ governor. Commenting on the DPJ's stance, Ibuki noted, "If there appear differences in the views of both parties, we must hold talks." In connection with Ibuki's remark, one senior LDP member said on the 9th, "It would be possible to hold a meeting of secretaries general or a consultative council of both chambers of the Diet."

TOKYO 00000616 007 OF 012

Ibuki during the same TV talk shows noted that the LDP has no intention of replacing Muto with another candidate. He said, "Prime Minister Fukuda believes that the DPJ will accept Muto as BOJ governor, using good judgment." DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama said that he would consider whether to agree to hold party head talks, making it a condition that the LDP come up with another candidate. However, Ibuki brushed aside this proposal, saying, "The prime minister would not accept such a condition." The DPJ has decided to put the issue to a vote on the 12th after hearing the policies of candidates for a governor and deputy governors. Ibuki countered this plan, saying: "It would be possible to hold a roll call on the 12th if there is a foregone conclusion. However, the decision must be reached after seeing the candidates' qualification and caliber."

10) DPJ negatively reacts to government's nomination of Ito as deputy BOJ governor; Ruling camp hopes for Fukuda-Ozawa meeting to break impasse

NKKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
March 8, 2008

Coordination between the ruling and opposition parties is expected to stall over the government's nomination of a new governor and deputy governor of the Bank of Japan, which was presented to the

Diet on March 7. The major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has stepped up its criticism of the government's plan to promote Deputy Governor Toshiro Muto, a former administrative vice finance minister, to the post of BOJ governor. The DPJ has negatively reacted also to the government's nominee, Tokyo University Prof. Takatoshi Ito, as deputy governor, citing that Ito is a member of the government's Economic and Fiscal Policy Council and thus favors the ruling camp. Some members in the ruling coalition have called for a meeting between Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa to break the impasse.

11) BOJ to consider appointing acting governor out of concern that governor's post could become vacant due to confrontation over nomination

SANKEI (Top Play) (Excerpts)
March 9, 2008

The Bank of Japan (BOJ) will start considering how to deal with a possible delay in the selection of a new governor, starting on Mar. 10. If a successor to incumbent Governor Fukui, whose term expires on the 19th, is not appointed in time, the next deputy governors and directors would be responsible for immediate operations. However, the BOJ governor's post has never been unfilled in the postwar period. Should that occur, it is bound to disturb the market and erode international trust in Japan. There is also concern that the situation could affect the economy, which is now at a delicate stage.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Policy Research Council Chairman Sadakazu Tanigaki on the 8th made a speech in Kochi Prefecture. Referring to the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ or Minshuto) opposition to a proposal for promoting incumbent Deputy Governor Toshiro Muto to governor, he sought approval from the DPJ to prevent the governor's post from becoming vacant. He noted, "It is absolutely unacceptable for the BOJ governor's post to become vacant when the economy is in a slump. I want the DPJ to use its good judgment." Former Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa in a speech

TOKYO 00000616 008 OF 012

given in the evening of the same day stressed, "I want the DPJ to consider the matter from a policy-oriented approach, by bearing in mind the weight of its veto power."

The BOJ Law stipulates that if the post of governor becomes vacant, a deputy governor serves as acting governor. In the event the deputy governors' posts also become vacant, one of the six directors is to perform the governor's task.

However, opposition parties are opposing the idea of a director serving as an acting governor, because the selection of BOJ directors does not require Diet approval.

12) Diet dissolution, general election "September or later": New Komeito head

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2008

Shunsuke Shigeta, Seoul

New Komeito President Akihiro Ota indicated a negative view to accompanying reporters about the possibility of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda shuffling his cabinet around this July's Group of Eight (G-8) summit to be held at Lake Toya in Hokkaido. "I think Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has no specific schedule in mind," Ota said.

Ota also noted that diplomatic events scheduled to take place from April through June are "extremely important" when he was asked when Fukuda will dissolve the House of Representatives for a general election. "September or afterward is desirable," Ota said.

13) MOD adopts revised emergency communication system, presenting specific quick reporting cases

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)

March 8, 2008

In the wake of the recent collision between the Maritime Self-Defense Force Aegis destroyer Atago and a small fishing boat, the Ministry of Defense (MOD) significantly delayed reporting the accident to Prime Minister Fukuda and Defense Minister Ishiba. Learning lessons from this, MOD has comprehensively reviewed internal regulations on the emergency communication system. Under the revised regulations, it is mandatory to speedily report to the prime minister's office (Kantei) and the defense minister not only on incidents and accidents but also on disasters and missile launches.

The revised rules were released on March 7 in the name of the administrative vice-defense minister.

Situations requiring quick reporting are grouped into four categories: (1) major natural disasters (such as earthquakes), (2) major accidents (such as collisions of vessels), (3) grave incidents (such as terrorist attacks and ballistic missile launches), and (4) other situations (such as misconduct by SDF personnel). Specific cases are discussed under each category.

14) Defense minister requires senior MSDF officers to "be frank toward politicians"

TOKYO 00000616 009 OF 012

SANKEI (Page 1) (Full)
March 9, 2008

In order to deal with a series of misconduct, including the recent collision of the Aegis destroyer Atago and a fishing boat, the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) on March 8 held a special session of commanders at the Ministry of Defense (MOD). The meeting was joined by Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba, Administrative Vice Defense Minister Kohei Masuda, and some 40 senior officers from the Maritime Staff Office and units across the country. They exchanged views to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents.

Emerging from the meeting, Eiji Yoshikawa, the MSDF chief of staff, said: "Many problems were raised. We need to improve the nature of the organization in addition to handling cases in a systematic manner."

The MSDF has suffered a spate of deplorable events before the recent collision, for instance, the leakage of information on the Aegis system, the fire aboard the destroyer Shirane, a cover-up of the amount of fuel oil provided by the MSDF to other countries' vessels in the Indian Ocean, and the destruction of a log book.

Yoshikawa said that from the viewpoint that "there may be something behind those cases," participants exchanged views at the session regarding such issues as (1) command and control, (2) personnel education, (3) response to the IT society, (4) the balance of the level of troops and duties; and (5) the question of whether the MSDF can win praise from the public. Ishiba said in his speech: "I can't help wondering why (deplorable events occurred in succession). While troop strength will not be increased, more duties and responsibilities are imposed on each personnel. What should we do? I don't think it is correct to keep silent." Ishiba continued, "SDF officers in uniform have the right to speak to politicians as to what should be done or what should be desirable to be done. Doing so is obligatory in terms of civilian control. I hope the organization will band together to work well both in peacetime and during emergencies." Ishiba thus strongly called on the staff to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents.

Yoshikawa told reporters: "After discussion, I want to begin implementing measures, starting with what we can do."

15) Okinawa prefectural rally executive committee launched to demonstrate prefecture's wishes

AKAHATA (Page 1) (Abridged slightly)
March 9, 2008

In the run-up to the Okinawa prefectural rally protesting incidents and accidents by U.S. service members to be held on March 23, an executive committee was launched on March 8. Assembled together in Naha on the same day, some 60 organizations decided on the purpose, slogans, and the venue for the rally.

The rally's purpose is to press Tokyo and Washington for a fundamental revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement and for consolidation and reduction of U.S. bases in the prefecture by the Okinawa public demonstrating their protest.

As slogans, the executive committee adopted: (1) human rights, (2) enforcing military discipline and education, (3) a sweeping reform

TOKYO 00000616 010 OF 012

of the SOFA, and (4) consolidation and reduction of U.S. bases in a visible way.

At the outset of the meeting, Tetsuei Tamayose, chairman of a child welfare organization, made a speech, in which he said: "This (incidents and accidents by U.S. service members) is a human rights issue. Human rights are guaranteed under the Constitution. Despite that, an incident (in which a U.S. Marine allegedly sexually assaulted a junior high school girl) occurred. If we do not speak up, we will lose the stable human rights environment."

The executive committee will hold the rally at the Chatan baseball ground starting at 2:00 p.m.

Many organizational representatives fervently voiced their resolves, one saying, "We must clearly protest the incidents and accidents by U.S. servicemen." Another said: "We must speak up for the girl who had to withdraw charges against (the U.S. Marine)."

16) 20 PERCENT of U.S. on-base military housing in Okinawa vacant

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
March 8, 2008

In connection with an incident in which a U.S. Marine was arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a middle school girl in Okinawa, the government has revealed that the occupancy rate at military housing at U.S. bases in the prefecture is 80 PERCENT . The government released the information in line with its position paper, adopted in a cabinet meeting on March 7, in response to a set of written questions from House of Representatives member Kantoku Teruya of the Social Democratic Party. The answer made it clear that 20 PERCENT of U.S. base military housing is vacant despite reports of an increasing number of U.S. service members living off-base.

According to a report to the government from U.S. Forces, the number of U.S. military housing units on bases in Okinawa was 8,139 as of January 31. Of them, 6,484 units, or 80 PERCENT , were occupied by U.S. military personnel. The remaining 1,655 units, including those under refurbishment, were vacant.

17) Poll of 108 companies: 70 PERCENT appreciate Kyoto Protocol; only 25 PERCENT expect Japan to meet its goal

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
March 9, 2008

About 70F PERCENT of the major companies polled by the Mainichi Shimbun appreciated the Kyoto Protocol, which obliges industrialized nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, citing that various countries have taken measures to cut emissions. About 70 PERCENT of the companies answered that measures for emissions cuts had not prevented their growth, taking the fight against global warming a positive manner. However, only 25 PERCENT said that Japan would achieve its goal. Many companies pointed to a lack of political leadership.

The Mainichi conducted the questionnaire of 120 companies between late January and mid-February, receiving answers from 108 companies, or 90 PERCENT .

Under the protocol, Japan is required to curb its greenhouse gas

TOKYO 00000616 011 OF 012

emissions by an average of six percent from the 1990 level over the next five years from April. But Japan instead increased them in 2006 by 6.4 percent from the 1990 level. Although some companies criticized the goals set by the accord as being too tough, 66 PERCENT of the companies answered that they appreciated the accord or appreciated it more or less.

A total of 68 PERCENT of the companies replied that anti-global-warming measures did not prevent their efforts for growth or that they did not prevent their growth by much. As reasons, they said they were confident of their energy-saving technologies and that the fight against global warming would provide them with new business chances.

Meanwhile, 33 PERCENT of the major companies said that Japan would fail to achieve its goal, citing a lack of political leadership and the low level of public awareness as the reasons. About 39 PERCENT said that they did not know.

The government announced on Feb. 20 its plan to consider the introduction of emissions trading in the country. In the questionnaires conducted prior to the government's announcement, 43 PERCENT of the companies said that they completely or somewhat opposed emissions trading. Only 26 PERCENT said that they approved of it. Many companies refrained from answering the question on the grounds that the contents of the emission trading system were unclear.

18) Nationwide poll: 78 PERCENT believe economy worsening;
Consumption remains stagnant due to income drop

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
March 9, 2008

The Japan Association for Public Opinion Research (JAPOR), of which the Tokyo Shimbun is a member, carried out a nationwide interview-based opinion poll on March 1-2. Regarding the present condition of the economy, a total of 78 PERCENT replied either "The economy is deteriorating" or "It is deteriorating somewhat." The number of pollees who gave these replies substantively increased (up 32 points) from the previous poll (46 PERCENT) conducted in March last year.

The poll found that the outlook for the domestic economy has extensively worsened over the past year due to concern about the slowdown of the global economy, following the subprime mortgage crisis and rising crude oil, cereal, and feed grain prices.

As reasons for that (more than one answer was allowed), the largest number of 48 PERCENT replied, "Consumption has not recovered," followed by 40 PERCENT, who replied, "Income, such as salaries and bonuses, is decreasing," 30 PERCENT, who said, "Sales and profits are deteriorating," and 22 PERCENT, who replied, "The number of jobless people has not decreased."

Pollees who replied, "The economy is picking up" or "It is getting somewhat better" reached 20 PERCENT in total, down 29 points from 49 PERCENT recorded in the previous poll.

To a question of whether life has gotten harder due to rising consumer prices, including the prices of gasoline and food, 38 PERCENT replied, "Life has gotten somewhat hard," followed by 34

TOKYO 00000616 012 OF 012

PERCENT who said, "Life has gotten hard." As reasons for that (multiple replies allowed), 91 PERCENT cited the rise in gasoline and kerosene prices, followed by 82 PERCENT who cited the rise in food prices. The outcome suggests that high prices of oil and raw materials are directly affecting households.

Regarding what respondents want most from Japanese administration in connection with a question on the tainted Chinese-made gyoza dumplings, 45 PERCENT of respondents said, "An increase in domestic ingredients." Regarding Japan's food self-sufficiency, 83 PERCENT said, "It should be raised." The largest 30 PERCENT of respondents said, "In order to raise the food self-sufficiency rate, the production volume of agricultural products should be boosted."

19) Government to hold expanded summit meetings on climate change and African development, joined by 23 countries

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2008

The government has decided to hold expanded meetings on climate change and African development, inviting China, Australia and other 13 countries, besides the Group of Eight (G-8) countries, during the Lake Toya Summit in Hokkaido in July. With a total of 23 participants, it will be the largest-ever summit. The government will also invite such international organizations as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the African Union (AU).

A former administrative vice foreign minister emphasized the significance of the upcoming summit, saying: "For Japan, it will be a chance that comes only once in 40 years." A G-8 member hosts the summit every eight years. In addition, this is the year of TICAD, which is held in Japan every five years.

The government wants to play up its political presence in dealing with the issues of climate change and African development. Japan has addressed the climate-change issue since the Kyoto conference on preventing global warming in 1997 and has also poured its efforts in developing Africa by holding the TICAD since 1993. Given this, the government has decided to hold two expanded meetings, inviting eight countries for each, besides the G-8 nations.

For the meeting on climate change, the government will invite industrialized countries, including Australia and South Korea, as well as emerging countries, such as China, Brazil, and South Africa. Discussion will be conducted on a post-Kyoto framework beyond 2012.

For the meeting on African development, the government plans to invite Tanzania and Ghana, with the aim of deepening discussion following TICAD 4, which will be held in Yokohama in May. Such issues as poverty reduction and health care will also be discussed, with representatives from the AU in attendance.

Holding expanded summit meetings has been a custom since the Kyushu / Okinawa Summit in 2000. Eleven countries were invited to an expansion meeting in Gleneagles in 2005; seven in the St. Petersburg Summit in 2006; and 10 in the Heiligendamm Summit in 2007.

SCHIEFFER